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International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Shingo **Miyamoto** (Japan)

I. Introduction

1. At its 9th plenary meeting, on 11 September 2000, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-fifth session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 2nd and 12th to 17th meetings, on 13 September and from 16 October to 6 November 2000, and held a general debate on the item at its 12th to 14th meetings, from 16 to 19 October 2000 (see A/C.4/55/SR.2 and 12-17).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/55/153).

4. At its 2nd meeting, on 13 September, the Committee decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to be chaired by the delegation of Chile, to prepare the draft resolutions on the item.

5. At the 12th meeting, on 16 October, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee made an introductory statement (see A/C.4/55/SR.12).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20).

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6. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee[1] (see A/C.4/55/SR.12).

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.4/55/L.8 and Rev.1

7. At the 14th meeting, on 19 October, the representative of Chile, on behalf of the Working Group, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/55/L.8).

8. On 23 October, the Committee had before it a statement of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.4/55/L.9).

9. At the 16th meeting, on 30 October, the representative of Chile orally revised draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8 by replacing operative paragraph 29, which read:

> "29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement the measures and activities as contained in the above-mentioned plan of action, based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III",

with the following text:

> "29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to begin implementing those measures and activities that are contained in the above-mentioned plan of action and are currently within the programme of work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III, and to ensure the full implementation of the plan with the necessary resources in 2002".

10. At the 17th meeting, on 6 November, the Chairman drew the attention of the Committee to a revised draft resolution (A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1) submitted by Chile on behalf of the Working Group, and to the statement of the programme budget implications of the revised draft resolution submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.4/55/L.9/Rev.1).

11. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.8/Rev.1 without a vote (see para. 12).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

12. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 51/122 of 13 December 1996 and 54/67 and 54/68 of 6 December 1999,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of mankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space,

Seriously concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space,

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Considering that space debris is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contributes to international cooperation, and the importance of further international cooperation in this field,

Convinced of the importance of the recommendations in the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development", adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), held at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999,[2]

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III,[3]

Convinced that the use of space science and technology and their applications in such areas as telemedicine, tele-education and Earth observation contribute to achieving the objectives of the global conferences of the United Nations that address various aspects of economic, social and cultural development,

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its forty-third session,[4]

1. *Endorses* the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its forty-third session;[4]

2. *Encourages* States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space[5] to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties;

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[2] See United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3, chap. I, resolution 1.

[3] A/55/153.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20).

[5] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 2222 (XXI), annex); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 2345 (XXII), annex); Convention on International

3. *Notes* that, at its thirty-ninth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued its work, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/67;[6]

4. *Notes with satisfaction* the agreement reached by the Legal Subcommittee on the question of the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit and the subsequent endorsement of that agreement by the Committee;[7]

5. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its fortieth session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries:

(a) Consider the following as regular agenda items:

(i) General exchange of views;

(ii) Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space;

(iii) Information on the activities of international organizations relating to space law;

(iv) Matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union;

(b) Consider the following single issues and items for discussion:

(i) Review and possible revision of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;[8]

(ii) The draft convention of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (Unidroit) on international interests in mobile equipment and the preliminary draft protocol thereto on matters specific to space property;

(c) Continue its review of the concept of the "launching State", in accordance with the work plan adopted by the Committee;[9]

6. *Notes* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its fortieth session, will submit its proposals to the Committee for new items to be considered by the Subcommittee at its forty-first session, in 2002;

7. *Notes also* that, in the context of paragraph 5 (a) (iv) above, and in accordance with the agreement referred to in paragraph 4 above, the Legal Subcommittee will reconvene its working group on the item only to consider matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space;

Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (resolution 2777 (XXVI), annex); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 3235 (XXIX), annex); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 34/68, annex).

[6] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20), chap. II.C.

[7] Ibid., para. 129, and A/AC.105/738, annex III.

[8] See General Assembly resolution 47/68.

[9] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* and corrigendum (A/54/20 and Corr.1), para. 114.

8. *Notes further* that, in the context of paragraph 5 (c) above, the Legal Subcommittee will reconvene its working group to consider the item;

9. *Takes note* of the agreement reached by the Committee at its fortieth session on the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies for the second term starting in 2000, in the context of the implementation of the measures relating to the working methods of those bodies,[10] which were endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 52/56 of 10 December 1997;

10. *Notes with satisfaction* that consensus decisions were reached on the composition of the bureaux for the second term and agrees that, in accordance with those consensus decisions, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee should elect their chairmen for the second term at the beginning of their thirty-eighth session and fortieth session respectively;

11. *Notes* that, in accordance with the measures relating to the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, mentioned in paragraph 9 above, consultations will be held among the regional groups at the forty-fourth session of the Committee to determine which group will be responsible for which office for the third term, starting in 2003;

12. *Notes* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-seventh session, continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/67;[11]

13. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-seventh session continued to consider, on a priority basis, the agenda item on space debris;

14. *Agrees* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should assess the effectiveness of existing space debris mitigation practices and the extent to which they were being implemented and that efforts to model and characterize the debris environment should continue;

15. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-eighth session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries:

(a) Consider the following items:

(i) General exchange of views and introduction to reports submitted on national activities;

(ii) United Nations Programme on Space Applications, following the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III);

(iii) Matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, including applications for developing countries and monitoring of the Earth's environment;

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[10] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/52/20), annex I.

[11] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20), chap. II.B.

(b) Consider the following items in accordance with the work plans adopted by the Committee at its forty-third session:[12]

(i) Use of nuclear power sources in outer space;

(ii) Means and mechanisms for strengthening inter-agency cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services within and among entities of the United Nations system;

(iii) Implementation of an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system;

(c) Consider the following single issues and items for discussion:

(i) Space debris, on a priority basis, consistent with paragraph 370 of the report of UNISPACE III;[13]

(ii) Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and of its utilization and applications, including, inter alia, in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to developments in space communications, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries;

(iii) Government and private activities to promote education in space science and engineering;

16. *Notes* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-eighth session will submit its proposal to the Committee for a draft provisional agenda for the thirty-ninth session of the Subcommittee, in 2002;

17. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee that the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical Federation, in liaison with Member States, should be invited to arrange a symposium on the theme "Terrestrial hazards from outer space objects and phenomena", with as wide a participation as possible, to be held during the first week of the thirty-eighth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

18. *Notes with satisfaction* that an industry symposium, with the participation of Member States, on emerging applications of global navigation satellite systems in improving the productivity of national and regional infrastructure will be organized during the thirty-eighth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

19. *Agrees* that, in the context of paragraphs 15 (a) (ii) and 16 above, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-eighth session should reconvene the Working Group of the Whole and that the Subcommittee should consider, through its Working Group of the Whole, the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;

20. *Also agrees* that, in the context of paragraph 15 (b) (i) above, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-eighth session should reconvene its Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;

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[12] See A/AC.105/697 and Corr.1, annex III, appendix, for the work plan for item (i), and A/AC.105/736, annex II, paras. 40 and 41 for items (ii) and (iii) respectively.

[13] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3.

21. *Encourages* all the organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to contribute to the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in the context of paragraph 15 (b) (ii) above by, inter alia, providing the Subcommittee with appropriate information in response to the list of questions approved by the Committee at its forty-third session;[14]

22. *Further agrees* that, in the context of paragraph 15 (c) (i) above, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-eighth session should conduct its work in accordance with the agreement of the Committee at its forty-third session;[15]

23. *Endorses* the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 2001, as proposed to the Committee by the Expert on Space Applications;[16]

24. *Notes with satisfaction* that, in accordance with paragraph 30 of General Assembly resolution 50/27 of 6 December 1995, the African regional centres for space science and technology education, in the French language and in the English language, located in Morocco and Nigeria respectively, began their first educational activities in April 2000, that the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific continued its education programme in 2000 and that progress has been achieved in furthering the goals of the Network of Space Science and Technology Education and Research Institutions for Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and in establishing regional centres for space science and technology education in the other regions;

25. *Also notes with satisfaction* that Member States concerned in Asia and the Pacific are holding further consultations, with the assistance of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, with a view to making the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific grow into a network of nodes;

26. *Recognizes* the usefulness and significance of the space conferences of the Americas for the Latin American countries, encourages the convening of a Fourth Space Conference of the Americas, and also encourages other regions to convene periodically regional conferences with a view to achieving convergence of positions on issues of common concern in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space among Member States of the United Nations;

27. *Urges* all Governments, organs, organizations and programmes within the United Nations system as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental entities conducting space-related activities to take the action necessary for the effective implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular its resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development",[2] and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;

28. *Notes* that, pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 54/68, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had submitted to the Committee for its

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[14] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20), para. 113.

[15] Ibid., para. 119.

[16] See A/AC.105/730, sect. II.

review at its forty-third session a plan of action to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III;[17]

29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to begin implementing those measures and activities that are contained in the above-mentioned plan of action and are currently within the programme of work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III, and to ensure the full implementation of the plan with the necessary resources in 2002;

30. *Agrees* that the Committee should include in the agendas of its forty-fourth to forty-seventh sessions, in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004, an item on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;[18]

31. *Requests* the Committee to prepare a report under the agenda item on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III for submission to the General Assembly in order for the Assembly to review and appraise, at its fifty-ninth session, in 2004, in accordance with paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 54/68, the implementation of the outcome of UNISPACE III and to consider further actions and initiatives;

32. *Encourages* all Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications to support activities to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular the priority project proposals as recommended by the Committee at its forty-third session;[19]

33. *Notes with satisfaction* that, in connection with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 54/68, special events of the United Nations were held at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 4 October 2000 to launch the first World Space Week and that other events were also held by interested Member States to celebrate World Space Week, and requests the Secretary-General to invite Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as space-related industries to make voluntary contributions to support activities to celebrate World Space Week;

34. *Recommends* that more attention be paid to all matters relating to the protection and the preservation of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment;

35. *Considers* that it is essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that international cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

36. *Urges* all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an

[17] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/55/20), para. 71.

[18] Ibid., para. 76.

[19] Ibid., para. 87.

essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

37. *Emphasizes* the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to the orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including mitigation of the consequences of disasters, in particular in the developing countries;

38. *Agrees* that the benefits of space technology and its applications should be prominently brought to the attention of conferences organized within the United Nations system to address global issues relating to social, economic and cultural development and that the use of space technology should be promoted towards achieving the objectives of those conferences and implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration; [20]

39. *Takes note* of the interest of certain countries, including Saudi Arabia and Slovakia, that submitted requests to become members of the Committee, as well as the requests of those countries that have been sharing seats on a rotating basis, namely, Cuba, Malaysia, Peru and the Republic of Korea, to have that practice terminated and to become full members, and requests the Committee to include in the agenda of its forty-fourth session an item on the enlargement of its membership to consider including as full members those countries requesting membership;

40. *Encourages* Member States to hold informal consultations on the enlargement of membership of the Committee during the thirty-eighth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and, if necessary, during the fortieth session of the Legal Subcommittee, with a view to reaching a consensus agreement on the matter at the forty-fourth session of the Committee;

41. *Requests* the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session;

42. *Also requests* the Committee to continue to consider, at its forty-fourth session, its agenda item entitled "Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status";

43. *Agrees* that a symposium on the theme "The human dimension in space science and technology applications" should be organized during the forty-fourth session of the Committee;

44. *Invites* the Committee to expand the scope of international cooperation relating to the social, economic, ethical and human dimension in space science and technology applications;

45. *Requests* the specialized agencies and other international organizations to continue and, where appropriate, enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with progress reports on their work relating to the peaceful uses of outer space;

46. *Also requests* the Committee to continue its work, in accordance with the present resolution, to consider, as appropriate, new projects in outer space activities

[20] Resolution 55/2.

and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, including its views on which subjects should be studied in the future;

47. *Further requests* the Committee to consider and identify new mechanisms of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, in accordance with the preamble to the present resolution.